



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 10

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OFFICE OF
ECOSYSTEMS, TRIBAL AND
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

September 7, 2010

Palmer Jenkins
Superintendent
North Cascades National Park Service Complex
810 State Route 20
Sedro-Woolley, Washington 98284

Re: EPA comments on draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Ross Lake National Recreation Area (NRA) General Management Plan. EPA Project Number 06-066-NPS

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the DEIS in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Section 309, independent of NEPA, specifically directs EPA to review and comment in writing on the environmental impacts associated with all major federal actions and the document's adequacy in meeting NEPA requirements.

The DEIS analyzes the no Action Alternative, Alternative A, and three action alternatives (Alternatives B, C and D) for future management of the Ross Lake NRA during the next 15 to 20 years. The DEIS presents strategies for resource protection, education and interpretation, visitor use and facilities, land protection and boundaries, and long-term operations and management of Ross Lake NRA. The alternatives vary by degree of management to support visitor use, desired future conditions, and application of the following management zones: Frontcountry, Backcountry, Wilderness, Skagit River, and Hydroelectric. The Frontcountry exists along the North Cascades Highway and developed areas and supports the highest degree of visitor access while the Backcountry and Wilderness zones focus on limited facilities and provide a sense of remoteness and natural conditions. The Skagit River Zone focuses on visitor facilities associated with river recreation and the Hydroelectric Zone includes areas where Seattle City Light operations exist and are linked to Frontcountry recreation activities. Alternative B contains a balance between Frontcountry and Backcountry management zones, Alternative C contains the most backcountry designation, and Alternative D contains the most Frontcountry designation. The DEIS identifies Alternative B as the Preferred Alternative and the Environmentally Preferred Alternative.

The document clearly describes the context for the plan, significance of natural resources, management strategies, and connection to other plans and authorities (e.g., Skagit River Management Plan, adjacent Forest Service plans, Seattle City Light's 30 year hydroelectric license). The document is also incredibly easy to follow and provides outstanding photographs

and watercolors that help the reviewer understand the setting and resource values of the NRA. We support the Preferred Alternative, Alternative B, and believe that this document will provide a management direction that protects and preserves resources, provides for a positive visitor experience, and a method for monitoring and assessing impacts over the life of the General Management Plan. Based on our review and evaluation, we have assigned a rating of LO (Lack of Objections) to the draft EIS. We have suggestions for you to consider including in the final EIS related to energy efficiency, green building, and stormwater management.

We acknowledge that "Energy Requirements and Conservation potential" were included in the topics dismissed from further consideration. However, we believe that a summary of the practices and federal requirements related to green building and conservation such as the list below is appropriate to include in the EIS (e.g., in Table 2.1). We recommend that they be considered in developing the final EIS and during development of new facilities.

- Executive Order 13514, Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance. This EO directs agencies to utilize environmentally preferable materials, products, and services and to design, construct, maintain, and operate high performance sustainable buildings.
 - Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA), Section 438
 - Stormwater: EISA Section 438 requires federal agencies to develop and redevelop facilities with a footprint that exceeds 5,000 square feet in a manner that maintains or restores the pre-development site other impacts.
 - Hydrology to the maximum extent technically feasible.
 - <http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/lid/section438/>
 - LEED Certification. The General Services Administration requires new projects to achieve LEED Silver, DOE requires LEED Gold. CBP requires LEED Certified.
 - Low Impact Development and cost-efficient, environmentally friendly landscaping. EPA's GreenScapes program provides cost-efficient and environmentally friendly solutions for landscaping. Designed to help preserve natural resources and prevent waste and pollution, GreenScapes encourages companies, government agencies, other entities, and homeowners to make more holistic decisions regarding waste generation and disposal and the associated impacts on land, water, air, and energy use.
- <http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserv/rrr/greenscapes/index.htm>

Thank you for the opportunity to review this DEIS. If you would like to discuss these issues, please contact Lynne McWhorter of my staff at (206) 553-0205, or via email at mchworter.lynn@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Christine B. Reichgott, Manager
Environmental Review and Sediment Management Unit

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Rating System for
Draft Environmental Impact Statements
Definitions and Follow-Up Action***

Environmental Impact of the Action

LO – Lack of Objections

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

EC – Environmental Concerns

EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce these impacts.

EO – Environmental Objections

EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no-action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

EU – Environmentally Unsatisfactory

EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potential unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

Category 1 – Adequate

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis of data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category 2 – Insufficient Information

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category 3 – Inadequate

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act and or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

**Construction Mitigation Measures
Adopted for Several Major Projects in California**

A. Administrative

1. Have a Mitigation Plan that is included in the FEIS and committed to in the ROD.
2. Require reporting.
 - a. Prepare inventory of all equipment prior to construction.
 - b. Report on suitability of add-on controls for each piece of equipment before groundbreaking.*
 - c. Evaluate other engine alternatives: electric, CNG, LNG, fuel cell, alternative diesel.
 - d. Monthly, public reports by Environmental Coordinator regarding fulfillment of requirements
3. Have suitability report subject to review by Air District, USDOT, State DOT, EPA and the public.

B. Equipment

1. Use add-on controls such as catalysts and particulate traps where suitable.
2. Use fuel with 15 ppm of sulfur or less unless unavailable.
3. Establish idling limit (e.g., 5-10 minutes per hour).
4. Tune to manufacturers' specs and do so at manufacturers' recommended frequency.
5. Prohibit any tampering with engines and require continuing adherence to manufacturers' recommendations.
6. Require that leased equipment be 1996 model or newer unless cost exceeds 110% of average lease cost.
7. Require 75% of total horsepower of owned equipment to be used to be 1996 or newer models.

C. Work limitations

1. Establish a cap on daily emissions and/or hours of work.
2. Use no more than 2 pieces of equipment simultaneously near or upwind from sensitive receptors.
3. Establish additional emissions limits within 1000 feet of any K-12 school.
4. Provide notification to all schools within 1000 feet.
5. Reduce truck trips and/or restrict hours of driving through communities to minimize risk.

* Suitability of control devices is based on whether there is reduced normal availability of the construction equipment due to increased downtime and/or power output, whether there may be significant damage caused by the construction equipment engine, or whether there may be a significant risk to nearby workers or the public. Such determination is to be made by the Contract Project Manager (CPM) in consultation with the appropriate vendor.